

Notes from stakeholder discussion groups:

SUCSESSES

1. Diverse participation
 2. Increase in transitional housing for vets
 3. Improved communication
 4. Improved coordination of services
 5. Recognized, authorized board (city & county working together)
- Shelter plus care is working
 - Interlace
 - MHO (Mountain Housing Opportunities), the VA, and HB (Homeward Bound) are offering good services & collaboration
 - WNCCHS has good medical/dental services
 - More players are putting something in education/sharing – getting them to those in crisis
 - HUD VASH– collaboration w/Housing Authority and VA
 - Using best practices models and bringing them to our area – implementation
 - Intensive research on supportive housing with the Woodfin, Griffin, and HST (Housing Support Team)
- Acknowledgement there is a problem
 - Getting homeless people connected with services
 - Agency knowledge of other services especially similar services
 - Better community cooperation to address the problem
 - More services slowly opening up
 - The data collection is working well
 - Regular meetings to plan & discuss
 - City/County Coordination
- 1) Strength in that the city has recognized need for affordable housing
 - 2) Homeward Bound – gaining case management services
 - 3) WNCCHS – partnered w/community
 - 4) SOAR – seen benefit of disabled receiving SSI & assistance with service navigation
 - 5) Communication between agencies (ex: PLS {Pisgah Legal Services} coordination with MH {mental health})
 - 6) Gotten Asheville City Council involved
 - 7) Jail Diversion has been successful w/MH (mental health) services (Ex: Women at Risk)

SUCCESESSES, continued

- * Increasing awareness & understanding of services offered
- Defining problem helps promote creative solutions
- Improved funding for mental health
- * Collaboration between agencies
- Allows networking between agencies & services

CHALLENGES

1. Dependant on volunteer time
 2. Funds need to be used for services and not administration
 3. Fund programs that use volunteers
 4. Need more money, more volunteers, more beds, more housing
 5. Laws against homeless are increasing
 6. "Bad" behavior being blamed on homeless (dehumanization of homeless)
- Spread word about dental
 - Continuing to educate – fast turnover (challenging nature of programs/requirements)
 - Supportive Services – MH (mental health) especially
 - Problems w/budgets; inconsistent services; approaches
 - Needs to be streamlined so consistent, quality service
 - Need more resources – financial for supportive housing programs that are working
 - Free up Section 8 Vouchers for chronic homelessness
 - Too much emphasis on "the homeless" problem and what they do to the community instead of how we can solve problem
- Include homeless as stakeholders-input on solutions
 - Funding slow and not enough
 - Tough housing standards in getting housing
 - Lack of affordable housing
 - Employers not paying a living wage
 - Transportation a barrier to work sites outside the city (rural areas)
 - Not enough choice vouchers – lack of funding and available housing
 - Increase # of mental health homes that are community based
 - Lack of shelters for families
 - 3 years into initiative – there needs to be a written plan (org chart) – more developed framework
 - Current federal level economic issues will greatly effect homeless initiatives
 - Overall, just a lack of resources

- Not enough faith-based initiatives across the region

CHALLENGES, continued

- Portal for entry should be anywhere they show up
- More focus on mental than homelessness; not being cared for as well and with resources
- Perception that Asheville is trying to push out homeless with development downtown
- Not enough focus on veterans – as recent as Iraq vets

1. Credit checks when applying for housing/criminal record checks
2. Lack of transitional housing
3. Long wait for Section 89 & public housing through AHA (Asheville Housing Authority)
4. Lack of landlords that will accept Section 8
5. Transportation (for out of city residents) to apply @ AHA (Asheville Housing Authority)
6. Concerns for safety with public housing communities
7. Lack of options for older teens (as head of household)
8. Not enough \$/resources
9. Lack of resources to assist with moving furniture/belongings for transitions

- Problem still exists – issues still there
- Funding is always an issue – need stable funding
- Not seamless as it could be; takes a while to connect people with services
- Need more mental health services
- Infrastructure not yet there/built
- Not enough housing that is SAFE!
- Employment & transportation (need more mini-buses) options limited
- # homeless is increasing
- Not enough substance abuse assistance
- Need connection to NC vocational rehab – moved to Biltmore Square Mall & not in proximity
- Public Housing – regulations prevent folks w/misdemeanors to find housing; regulations/criteria is too stringent (Hypocrisy w/example of a Guards in prisons can have a record of misdemeanors but can get a job w/out issue while others cannot get public housing w/same record)
- Folks need support for unanticipated events (e.g. a reference for housing or job)
- Need more education – life skills
- Need support/assistance once housing is obtained to be able to stay in housing
- Basic encouragement – little things that could be solicited from business community

GOALS

1. Improved communication
 2. De-criminalize homelessness
 3. Federal dollars are reaching our community (preserve current funds and advocate for new ones)
 4. More support for the Homeless Initiative Coordinator
 5. Any new housing development needs to include affordable housing in order to get a building permit
- Need true housing first program
 - Need HUD to make true subsidized bonus – that creates more opportunities
 - Redefine homeless to public
 - Not about incidents but what is the real problem and how can we viably solve it
 - Bring in more players:
 - Employment security commission
 - DMV
 - Public Transportation – expand routes for more residential communities
 - Rescue Mission
 - Homeless Population
 - MH services more intimately involved (RHA, MHA, Compass...)
- Have a master plan – specific agency coordination (flow-chart of coordination)
 - Clear, specific goals/tasks that are measurable
 - Community agency success defined and prioritized to support the homeless initiative better
 - Locate more affordable housing/transitional housing
- 1) Credit checks – find solution so families won't be denied housing/work with AHA (Asheville Housing Authority) to be more flexible
 - 2) Refer folks to On-Track for budgeting assistance and improve credit
 - 3) Inclusionary Zoning to include affordable housing
 - 4) Make public aware
- Make sure H.I. (homeless initiative) funding is maintained – no reductions in funding
 - Cohesive/Comprehensive homeless transportation solution
 - Draw attention – get more funding
 - Get veterans off the streets
 - Reduce homelessness by 10%